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Section 1:

Introduction

THE GOLDEN ERA OF IDAHO HIGHWAYS

Like its many siblings throughout the country, Idaho's interstate highway system was born out of a vision by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to create a family of highways that connect peoples in every region – from the crashing surf of the Pacific to the towering Rockies. From the fertile plains to the cliffs of New England. That highway network united the United States. It delivered commodities, grew economies, connected families and fostered a new freedom of movement never before possible.



Basking in the luxuries of the 21st century, more than half of the nation's population cannot remember a period without the interstate highway system. They cannot comprehend cross-state journeys that took days. They cannot conceive of Pacific and Atlantic coasts separated by weeks.

Idaho's interstate highway system is an integral part of the national system, serving as a conduit for manufactured goods and agricultural products, serving tourism and recreation and providing access to jobs and commerce. Nearly every major Idaho city is located on an interstate route or has quick access to an interstate. The modern, multi-lane highways carry traffic through Idaho's arid southern region, across the scenic northern panhandle, and through agricultural areas of eastern Idaho.

The interstates connect people and places. They shorten travel times, and they provide safer travel conditions. Idaho joins the rest of the nation in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Highway System. Plan a trip and experience Idaho while enjoying Idaho's 612 miles of interstate.

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP)

The purpose of the STIP is to provide for a fiscally sound, set (1-5 years) capital improvement plan for the state's surface transportation program. The STIP is not just a document, but a fully integrated transportation planning process for transportation planning and transportation project selection. The STIP has been developed through a coordinated and cooperative process by the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) involving citizens, elected officials, tribal governments, other state and federal agencies, each of

Idaho's six metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) and other interested organizations.

The STIP establishes schedules for a variety of projects, including:

- Highways and bridges;
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- Highway safety;
- Congestion mitigation and air quality;
- Railroad crossing safety;
- Airports;
- Public transportation; and
- Transportation planning, etc.

The STIP is consistent with the department's long-range transportation plan called ***Vision 2034***. In 2004, the Idaho Transportation Board adopted ***Vision 2034***. During the visioning process, citizens told the Idaho Transportation that they want to create a transportation system that:

- Provides different means of transport to support the vitality of the state's economy, an abundance of family wage jobs, and the "Idaho way of life."
- Recognizes the need for efficient flow of freight and other "through traffic" along highways and between airports.
- Appreciates Idaho's recreational opportunities afforded by Idaho's natural beauty.
- Maintains and builds well-connected pedestrian and bicycle facilities so they do not always have to move in vehicles.
- Collaborates planning at the state and local levels to integrate transportation and land-use.
- Supports mode choices such as public transportation and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
- Jointly searches for flexible funding alternatives to achieve our transportation goals.

By federal law (ref. 23 CFR 450.216), the STIP is required to be fiscally constrained and include at least four-years of projects. The state, however, chooses to show a five-year Capital Improvement Program as its STIP. Preliminary Development (PREL) is reserved

only for local agencies and is for information and planning purposes only. It does not constitute a promise for development. Also included by federal regulations are “regionally significant” projects that may or may not use federal or state transportation funding. These projects are included because they are significant to the overall transportation system of the state or region. As will be outlined later in this document (see Section 3: Project Information), the STIP contains project details such as description, cost, year of construction and sponsoring agency. Please note that all costs are estimates until ultimately construction occurs.

The STIP PLANNING PROCESS

Idaho’s STIP Planning Process (see Figure 1 or go to <http://itd.idaho.gov/planning/reports/stip/StipProcess.html>) begins each year in October with the approval, by the Idaho Transportation Board, of the current Draft STIP. Upon approval by the Board, the STIP is sent to the Federal Highway (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administrations (FTA) for their approval. Once FHWA/FTA approval has been granted (usually between 5-6 weeks), the department may begin using federal funds from the newly drafted STIP for projects.

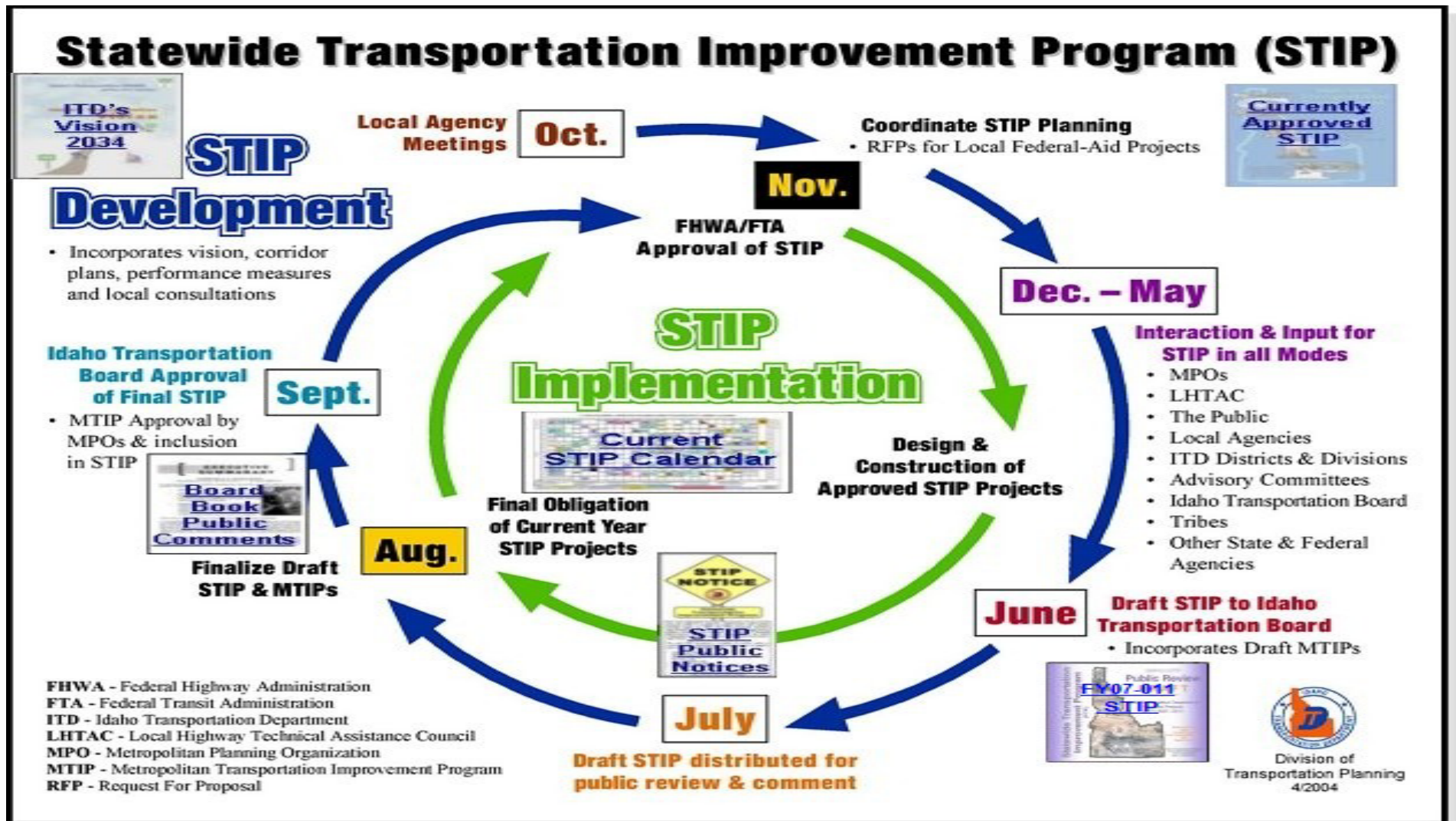
But October is when planning for the next cycle of the STIP begins as well. Local agency meetings are planned by the Planning staff within each district to begin discussing STIP coordination and planning efforts with local agencies for their part of the federal-aid projects. At this time programs such as Transportation Enhancement (TE), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, and local urban and rural application processes are announced.

From November to May each year, the Districts interact and gather input for the STIP for all modes from the MPOs, LHTAC, local agencies, other internal divisions, advisory committees, the Idaho Transportation Board, Indian Tribes, other state and federal agencies, and most importantly, the public.

During this time, projects that have been federally approved in the five-year STIP (usually in the prior November or December) are being developed in design and obtaining environmental clearance and acquiring needed right-of-way, or getting ready for construction. For those projects in the current fiscal year of the STIP, final design is occurring so that construction can take place.

January is when the Department forecasts how much money will be available from both federal and state funds to use for transportation projects. In February these revenue forecasts go out to ITD district offices, LHTAC and MPOs, which in turn recommend projects for inclusion in the next draft STIP that could be completed with the available funding.

FIGURE 1: STIP Planning Process



In June of each year, the project Capital Investment Program (CIP)/draft STIP is presented to the Transportation Board along with information about how the program addresses strategic performance areas and the status of the statewide priority projects. The public then has a 30-day opportunity for review the draft STIP.

Although public involvement is received throughout the entire process, the 30-day comment and review period following the issuance of the draft STIP in July is necessary to gather additional input from those that may not normally be involved in the development of projects. The official comment period also assesses if the decisions made by the department fulfill the value and needs of the community as a whole. Encouraging and reviewing the extensive public involvement comments gathered during the STIP in July helps the Idaho Transportation Board make their final decisions as to the project priorities that will be submitted to FHWA and FTA for approval. During this time, each of the MPO Boards approves their Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) and submits it to ITD for inclusion in the final STIP.

In October, the ITD Board approved STIP is compiled and sent to the Federal Highway (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administrations (FTA) for final approval. Within approximately 30-45 days, federal approval may be granted and the STIP becomes final. Then the process begins again.

MPO PARTNERS

A Metropolitan Planning Organization, commonly referred to as an MPO, is an association of local agencies that coordinate transportation planning and development activities within a metropolitan area. Establishment of an MPO is required by law in urban areas with populations of more than 50,000 in order for the area to use federal transportation funding. Also in urban areas with a population of more than 200,000 people, a Transportation Management Area (TMA) must be established. MPOs are established to ensure coordination and cooperation among the various jurisdictions that oversee transportation within the urban area.

On August 10, 2005, President Bush signed into law the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU). This is the transportation law that guides not only the funding, but the planning for transportation nationwide. One of the fundamental regulations outlined in SAFETEA-LU is that the state and each MPO must create a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The creation/decision-making of the TIP is guided by:

- A policy board, generally comprised of local elected officials and public agency officials who administer or operate major modes of transportation, and
- A technical advisory group of professional planners and engineers who are often employees of the same agencies.

An MPO is not a level of government; however, the MPO has effective control over transportation improvements within the area since a project must be a part of the MPO's adopted long-range plan and be placed in their metropolitan TIP in order to receive federal funding.

SAFETEA-LU requires that the STIP and the TIP “mirror” each other. In other words, the federal-aid or regionally significant projects in the TIP must be reflected in the STIP. There are six (6) MPOs in Idaho. You may contact them for more information or to get a copy of their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The agencies are:

- **Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization (KMPO)** consisting of all the communities in Kootenai County.

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E-mail: gmiles@srtc.org
Web site: <http://www.kmpo.net/>

- **Lewis-Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (L-CVMPO)** consisting of the cities of Lewiston and Clarkston.

Steve Watson, Director
P.O. Box 759 · Asotin, WA 99402
Phone: 208.746-1318 · FAX: 208.746-5595
E-mail: SWatson@cityofLewiston.org
Website: <http://lewisclarkmpo.org/>

- **Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS)** – Northern Ada County Metropolitan Planning Area and TMA consisting of the cities of Boise, Garden City, Eagle, Meridian, Kuna, and Star, and the Nampa Metropolitan Planning Area consisting of the cities of Nampa, Caldwell and Middleton.

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- **Bannock Planning Organization (BPO)** consisting of the cities of Pocatello and Chubbuck.

Mori Byington, Planning Director

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FAX: 208.233-4841

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Web site: <http://www.bannockplanning.org>

- **Bonneville Metropolitan Planning Organization (BMPO)** consisting of the cities of Idaho Falls, Ammon and Iona.

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LOCAL AGENCY PARTNERS

Transportation systems depend on government involvement at many levels for their development and maintenance. Thus, the Idaho Transportation Department has created a number working relationships with other state and federal agencies and with our local agency partners. Each time a project is developed; the department looks for various ways to improve transportation systems within their community and help to make the system more responsive to community needs. Unimproved transportation systems can affect the quality of our air, increase energy consumption, and add tremendous burdens to our lives, such as increased commute times, higher product costs and loss of community character. Each project in the STIP is linked to sound fiscal constraints, good planning and preservation of our environment (as deemed necessary by the ***Vision 2034*** process).

Furthermore, federal legislation emphasizes the need for different government entities to coordinate their transportation plans and projects (Title 23 United States Code (23 U.S.C.), 134 and 135; 49 U.S.C. 5303 through 5305). Specifically, the legislation states: *"It is in the national interest to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems that will serve the mobility needs of people and freight and foster economic growth and development... ." and "The process for developing the plans and programs shall provide for consideration of all modes of transportation and shall be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate, based on the complexity of the transportation problems to be addressed."*

By coordinating plans, the department and its local partners can accomplish tasks in a timely fashion, make more efficient use of limited funds, increase their understanding of what people want, and make local plans fit better with regional and national planning efforts. There are several agencies that the department partners with. These are just a few:

1. Counties/Cities – Local Agency Consultation

Throughout the year, ITD consults with and consider the concerns of non-metropolitan local officials in the cities and counties, when making transportation decisions in the STIP duties. During 2006, the department conducted a survey of non-metropolitan local officials to review and solicit comments regarding the STIP process; determine how the state could better program and deliver projects; and ensure that there is ongoing open communication between the state and local agencies. The Local Agency Consultation Report is available upon request.

2. Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC)

In 1994, the Idaho Legislature created the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC). The Surface Transportation Programs (STP) – Local Rural and Local Urban are managed by LHTAC in Idaho. These programs are funded by the Federal Highway Administration through the Idaho Transportation Board. LHTAC, under the direction of the state legislature, assists local highway jurisdictions to prepare for the future transportation needs through a systematic planning approach. LHTAC recognizes that each community has a variety of needs and that transportation plans will differ in scope to accommodate the specific local highway jurisdiction.



3. Tribal Planning Agencies



The Idaho Transportation Department, through its Districts and the coordinating MPO, work to maintain a government-to-government relationship with Indian Tribal Governments. This special relationship is affirmed in treaties, Supreme Court decisions, and executive orders. Furthermore, FHWA and other Federal agencies consult with Tribes regarding policy and regulatory matters. Additionally, 23 CFR 134 and 23 CFR 135 establishes consultation requirements with tribes through the Statewide and Metropolitan planning and programming processes.

During the statewide transportation planning process, ITD considers the needs of Indian tribal governments when carrying out planning; consults with tribal governments in long range planning issues; and consults with Indian tribal governments in development of the STIP.

AIR QUALITY AND CONFORMITY

Transportation conformity is required under section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7506(c)) to ensure that federally supported highway and transit project activities are consistent with ("conform to") the purpose of a State Implementation Plan (SIP). Conformity to the purpose of the SIP means that transportation activities will not cause new air-quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the state's transportation conformity rules establish the criteria and procedures for determining whether transportation activities conform to the state air quality plan.

Prior to STIP approval, the STIP and TIP must meet air-quality conformity in those areas of the state that may have air quality concerns. The metropolitan planning organizations in those areas have regional long-range transportation plans that take into consideration these air quality conformity issues by creating plans that concentrate on various transportation corridors, pathways, public transportation systems, and transportation system management elements. Prior to final approval and construction, all projects in air-quality nonattainment and maintenance areas will have met all applicable air-quality conformity requirements, including those relevant to specific pollutants and implementation plans.

There are two areas of Idaho that require conformity. They are:

1. Northern Ada County Air Quality and Conformity

In April of 2003, COMPASS was designated as the MPO for the Nampa Urbanized Area, located in neighboring Canyon County. The agency's service area covers the cities of Boise, Caldwell, Eagle, Garden City, Kuna, Meridian, Middleton, Nampa, and Star. EPA designated Ada County as a non-attainment area for Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) and Carbon Monoxide (CO).

- **Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀)**

Northern Ada County is designated as a maintenance area in attainment of the 24-hour PM₁₀ National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) and an attainment area for the annual PM₁₀ standard.



- **Carbon Monoxide (CO)**

Additionally, Northern Ada County is designated as a maintenance area in attainment of the carbon monoxide (CO) NAAQS. This area has not experienced a violation of the Carbon Monoxide NAAQS since 1987. The IDEQ submitted the *Limited Maintenance Plan and Request for Redesignation to Attainment for the Northern Ada County Carbon Monoxide Not-Classified Nonattainment Area* to the EPA in December 2001. The EPA approved the Limited Maintenance Plan and subsequently redesignated the area in December 2002. Maintenance areas under a limited maintenance plan are not required to demonstrate their transportation programs or long-range transportation plans conform through a regional emissions analysis. Therefore, there are no applicable CO motor vehicle emissions budgets established for Northern Ada County. For more information concerning the Northern Ada County SIP, please visit the COMPASS website at: http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/airquality/fy0711_conformity_final_june.pdf.

2. Bannock Planning Organization

The second area of the state that has air quality conformity requirements is in the Pocatello/Chubbuck area. The Bannock Planning Organization (BPO) is the metropolitan planning organization for the area. According to BPO, their area was redesignated as attainment by EPA, however, they do have a State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the Portneuf Valley Non-Attainment Area which requires annual conformity determinations. Their current TIP and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) meets the motor vehicle emissions budget as listed in the SIP.